

Multiworld

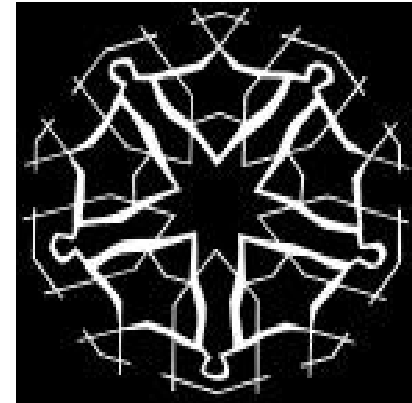
A word from the editors 1
Multiworld websites 2

Multiversity

The captive mind revisited 3
The university in ruins 5
Mutiversity: Work in progress 6
Multiversity news 7
Dharampal 8

Taleemnet

Rural curriculum 9
Taleemnet news 10
Aksharnandan 11
Vernacular educators 12
Educating differently 14
First person: David Hogg 16



A word from the editor

Kamiriithu – Multiversity's critical and no-holds-barred journal on learning and education – is rejuvenated and, after a considerable lapse of time, back again in your hands. Sorry for the inordinate delay. It was never thought we would be short of both: hands *and* minds. How do small fry like us compete with call centres? Since we had at the very beginning announced we would bring out issues only if and when we had quality stuff, we decided to sit tight and wait for more propitious times and people. Those have finally arrived. Good sense will always prevail. The re-appearance of *Kamiriithu* is therefore an occasion to rejoice.

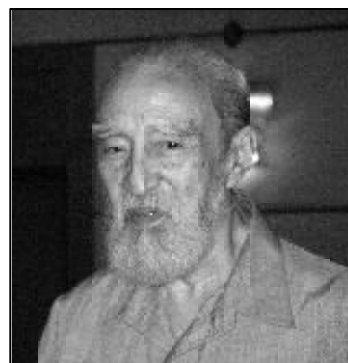
On the other hand, we must weep as well: in more recent months, we have lost forever two beacon lights – the distinguished Indian historian, Dharampal, and the pioneering Malaysian social scientist, Syed Hussein Alatas. The departure of these two truly inspiring individuals is a gentle but firm reminder that we are not working with eternal time-frames to bring about the changes we desire. Dharampal and Alatas provided pioneering leadership on how we might become ourselves again. Both contributed in a substantial way to redefining or altering our perceptions of the world, one through history, the other through sociology. Many people with far greater resources have achieved almost nothing in comparison. There are now dedicated websites on both thinkers. (Most of the printed works of the two thinkers can also be downloaded from www.multiversitylibrary.com.) A visit to all these sites is bound to give us inspiration and courage to cope with these rude times. This issue of *Kamiriithu* also carries notes on both Dharampal and Alatas and some of their articles and speeches.



Dharampal (1922-2006)

This year also happens to be the one hundredth and fiftieth anniversary of the setting up of the first three modern universities of India by Britain's colonial rulers. These institutions ruled the minds of the so-called educated people of the vast sub-continent for ninety years and we have continued to patronise them for a further sixty. Mahatma Gandhi, talking of our body politic immediately before independence, had hazarded the view that we might succeed in getting rid of our colonisers fairly soon, but it would take us a considerably longer period of time to extinguish the residues of colonization from our midst. Like our universities.

This time the issue of *Kamiriithu* has a total of sixteen richly stacked pages, eight dealing with multiversity issues and eight with taleemnet concerns. Though some of our readers have expressed vehemently that the two should be published separately, we have found it convenient to bring them as a two-in-one. So if you are not interested in the materials that appear either in the first half (multiversity) or the second half (taleemnet), pass on those sections to someone in your neighbourhood or in your institution or group who might be interested and would be happy to receive the material.



Syed Hussein Alatas (1928-2007)

From January, Ram Subramaniam and Vishram Gupte have attached themselves for week-long Multiversity conferences in Goa. These conferences are held every month. Information about them and the dates fixed for these meetings are posted on the multiworld website. We have also had conferences with Gurveen Kaur from Hyderabad and Anuradha Veeravalli from Delhi. Nyla Coelho from Belgaum and Navina Venkat from Mumbai come for weekly stints to work with Claude Alvares on taleemnet issues, especially the publication of the *Learning Sourcebook*. Interested? Welcome aboard!

2007 Vol.II No.4

The MultiworldNetwork's Newsletter

Kamiriithu

MUNDOS

MUCHOS

AN

QUEP

EN QUE

MUNDO

UN

Multiworld websites

www.multiworld.org

Multiworld.org is the main Multiworld website.

A related website maintained by Citizen's International can be accessed at the following url: www.citizensint.org

We are encouraging educational activists in every country within the South to have their own Multiworld chapter and site, operated by their own core group. Naturally, several of these will be in their own national, regional or local languages, with crosslinks to the main Multiworld page.

The main website will eventually host discussions in the principal languages of the South besides English: Hindi, Chinese, Swahili, Spanish, Arabic, Farsi, etc.

Multiworld.org also hosts the Multiversity site, the Taleemnet site, the organic agriculture site and the (Natural Farming Institute).

We also provide linkages to several other sites which are working in similar directions, including Shikshantar and the Barefoot College.

We envision separate Multiworld sites on specific issues like the WTO, debt, international law, etc. Any person volunteering to set up and run such sites for us is welcome to do so. Please keep us informed so that work is not unnecessarily duplicated. If you come across interesting sites that should be linked with the Multiworld page, please inform us.

The multiworld.org site is being updated regularly. We welcome comments and contributions to the multiworld webpage from sympathetic colleagues and friends in Asia, Africa and South America. This Network is not designed to be run from above, but through its numerous constituents.

You can also join the e-group set up by Multiversity from the website.

alternative learning

This site is exclusively for reporting on discussions and experiments dealing with learning experiences outside school walls or outside the framework of 'factory schooling'.

Taleemnet is actually the first major network dedicated exclusively to de-schooling or unschooling experiments in Asia, Africa and South America. It is determined to reverse the processes of colonial education which still persist in our countries despite political independence.

The site aims to create an international community of parents and students who take a decision to "walk-out" of school and resume learning using their own resources.

Educators, parents and students are encouraged to visit the site to learn about the mental and spiritual damage that is done to children and learners when they submit themselves to the coercive processes of schooling.

After reading the critique, parents may be interested in knowing what other parents are doing in different parts of the country and abroad.

The site features stories of children who have done better out of school than if they had continued with it.

The site also provides a detailed overview of educational systems outside the purview of Western educational institutions. All the prominent thinkers on education from the Global South are also featured, together with their writings.

Links are provided to significant home-schooling movements within the industrialised countries where there is an even greater mental anguish about the negative impact of schooling on personality development of children and youth.

organic agriculture

This site deals exclusively with the field of organic agricultural science and the workings of the Natural Farming Institute.

Traditional agriculture in almost all countries has been replaced by imported agribusiness science based on use of copious synthetic chemicals and toxic pesticides.

In several countries farmers, in fact, have completely lost the indigenous knowledge of farming and are now finding it difficult to survive with an alien system of growing crops that is not only unprofitable but actually devastates the environment.

The site will report on intellectual work carried out by farmers and innovations in the area of restoring soil fertility, improving the micro-community of soil species and organisms, homemade inputs, etc.

The main activities of organic farming are carried out under the rubric of the Organic Farming Association of India which has located its central secretariat in Goa. (See its website: www.ofai.org.)

The first major activity of OFAI has been the conducting of training camps for farmers eager to turn away from chemical farming.

One special focus is the children of organic farmers who once they go to school, find themselves alienated from the land and from agriculture. The Natural Farming Institute is keen on formulating a syllabus for home schooling of children of such farmers, so that they can be well versed with both, the demands of living in the modern world and the knowledge and expertise of their parents relating to agriculture.

A recent report commissioned from Sarang on a rural curriculum is posted on the NFI site.

multiversity msn

Yusef Progler from the UAE runs an independent Multiversity website which also features exciting new discussion material, rare articles and reports on Multiversity themes.

You can access the site at: <http://groups.msn.com/multiversity>

Join the discussions there. The site is frequently updated and the discussions way out. Everything relating to the regime of Western academic studies is being challenged with determination, verve and imagination.

Progler is also editing a series of short booklets containing essays by important scholars who have attempted to challenge in a fundamental way Western academic culture and its various associated components. Called the "Radical Essentials Pamphlet Series", the essays appear in the format of colourful booklets.

multiversity USA website

Vinay Lal, Indian historian now domiciled in the US and a participant in both the Penang conferences on redesign of social science curricula, has hosted the USA equivalent of Multiversity at the above site. You can access it at: <http://vlal.bol.ucla.edu/multiversity/>.

The site is designed to assist students and lecturers in the US who are interested in pursuing these issues and forming a workgroup on some of Multiversity's themes. It is therefore devoted exclusively to university education and not to schooling.

The site also provides details of a series of pamphlets brought out by Vinay Lal on thinkers and articles of consequence for scholars interested in these pursuits.

Subscription Form forKamiriithu Newsletter

Yes, count me in on this enterprise. I want to deliver a mortal blow to globalisation's designs on the minds, spirits and lives of children and young people everywhere.

Name:_____

Address:_____

Country:_____ **Pin / Post Code:** _____

Tel.:_____ **Mobile:** _____

Fax: _____ **E-mail:** _____

SUBSCRIPTION RATE

India: Rs.100 per year
(including postage)

Please send the subscription money as a pay order, M.O. or DD in the name of Other India Bookstore, Mapusa, Goa. You can also send it in the form of postage stamps.

Asia, Africa, South America, Aotearoa:
Air: US\$ 6.00

Kamiriithu postal address:
G-8 St Britto's Apartments,
Feira Alta, Mapusa 403 507
Goa, India.

Phone/Fax:
(91-832) 2256479; 2263305 (fax)

E-mail:
multi.worlds@gmail.com

WEBSITES

<http://www.multiworld.org>
<http://www.multiversitylibrary.com>

BRINGING COLOUR BACK INTO ACADEMIC STUDIES

Multiversity



Prof. Syed Hussein Alatas inaugurated the Multiversity II Conference on 'Redesign of Social Science Curricula.' What follows are excerpts from his lecture on 'the captive mind'.

Syed Hussein Alatas
(1928-2007)

Prof Syed Hussein Alatas passed away at his home in Damansara Heights, Kuala Lumpur, on the evening of 23 January 2007, after suffering a heart attack. He was born on 17 September 1928 in Bogor, Indonesia.

Prof. Alatas began his academic career in 1958. Between 1963 to 1967 he taught at the University of Malaya (UM) and from 1967 to 1978 he served as the Head of the Malay Studies Department at the National University of Singapore (NUS). Between the late 1960s to the 1970s, he played an active role in Malaysia's political environment, helping to form the multiracial Gerakan Party in 1968. In 1972 he helped to form the Parti Keadilan Masyarakat Malaysia (Malaysian Social Justice Party, Pekemas). In 1988 he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaya. From the mid-1990s he spent the last decade of his academic life at the Department of Anthropology and Sociology of the National University of Malaysia (UKM), before moving on to serve as Professor and Senior Fellow at the Institute for the Study of the Malay World and Civilisation (ATMA) at the same university.

He is best known for his critical questioning of the education system and creating an environment for understanding of the world independent of western entrapments. In 1956, as a postgraduate student at the University of Amsterdam, Syed Hussein's article on 'Some Fundamental Problems of Colonialism' – in which he argues about the folly of aping the Western thinking – was published in a journal called *The Eastern World* based in London. His best known work is the '*The Myth of the Lazy Native*' originally conceived in 1966 and after much research published in 1977. His two contributions in the *International Social Science Journal* on the captive mind in 1972 and 1974 were the only two offerings on the subject. The conceptualization of the captive mind led to several books, among others, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, *Intellectuals in Developing Societies* and *Modernization and Social Change in Southeast Asia*.



Prof. Alatas presents his talk on the 'captive mind' flanked by (from left) Vinay Lal, Mohamed Idris, Claude Alvares and Ashis Nandy

I would like to share with you today four or five aspects connected with this theme, of the 'Captive Mind'. It was in the early 1950s that I started doing some research on this subject. My first publication on this theme was titled 'Some Fundamental Problems of Colonialism'. It appeared in 1956 in a London journal called *The Eastern World*.

After the second World War we witnessed the independence of several states in Asia and Africa and one of the problems which emerged was this tendency of our people to imitate the thinking of the West and the ideas introduced by the colonial powers. For example, heavy emphasis was given to this new fangled idea of development. Simultaneously, important interests of the Third World were cast aside. The new leaders also saw no function whatsoever for the religious leaders in the development programme. Development was purely a matter of government planners and economists. The function of other groups in society was not seen and not highlighted. This is what I mean by imitation – not only taking up certain ideas and concepts introduced to us by the West but also, at the same time, setting aside things which are very important to the non-western world.

I have spent a lot of time in the sixties on the theme of the captive

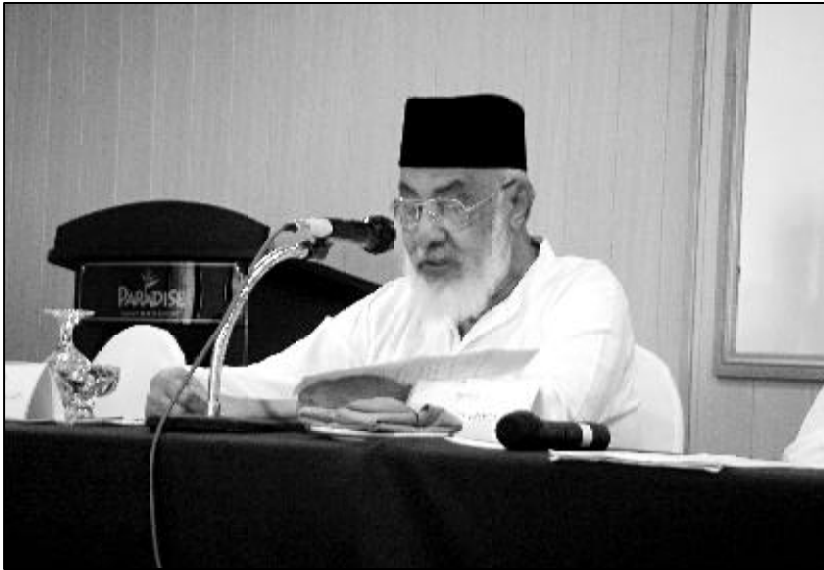
mind. One aspect which I did not have time to develop is the problem of the captor mind, or the capturing mind. I have concentrated so far on the captive mind because the captive mind is most urgent as far as the developing society is concerned. We are concerned with the enslaved because we all know that change can be achieved only if there is an awakening of the slave community. Without a change in the attitude of the slave community, there can never be any change. Understanding the slaveholders was less urgent to me at that particular point of time than understanding the enslaved. Therefore I had concentrated then on the captive mind. But now, I think, this subject should be explored too.

I have also spent my time demonstrating my ideas because I believe that we cannot have such a dialogue merely on a theoretical plane. We have to demonstrate. You cannot, for instance, settle the issue of beauty in a beauty contest (pardon me for using this example because I am not in favour of beauty contests) by discussing the theory of beauty. You can settle the contest by lining up the beautiful contestants and declaring the winner. So you have to put your beliefs into practice in order to convince people.

Similarly, in the field of research, there is only one way to

convince society of the need to get away from intellectual captivity and that is by doing some works which demonstrate that this is the kind of work which we want done and this does not bear the stamp of intellectual captivity. Hence I wrote the book '*The Myth of the Lazy Native*', to demonstrate the kind of scholarship that was developed in the colonial period, which is no more relevant.

I believe that we should have our own scholarship. Having our own scholarship does not mean being ethnically biased. It does not mean turning the tables on the colonial powers and offering something of the same kind by way of a substitute. For instance, in history, the colonial historians wrote about our bad rulers, so what do we do – we just reverse it. We just say that the guys they said were bad, were in fact good. Oh no. This would mean adopting their attitude and values in reverse. That attitude according to me is the summit of captivity because this would demonstrate that they have conditioned you to react exactly like them. The scholarship we have to develop is our own scholarship, with our own categories of analysis, giving a different picture and dragging out what they tried to hide. In other words, we have to offer a more complete and true picture, using values which are truly universal and truly moral.



S.M. Mohamed Idris inaugurates the 'Redesign of Social Sciences' international workshop organised by Multiversity at Penang.

I have spent eleven years in Holland, as a student in the University of Amsterdam. I remember being continuously bombarded with the idea of neutrality and the theory of relativity in the social sciences. I resisted them from the beginning. There is no such thing as objectivity without morality. Research must be based on objectivity, but it cannot be without morality.

Social scientists should not be victims of intrusion of their own subjective value judgement. However, after studying the subject objectively, the question of morality comes in.

Do we want crime to happen or not? Of course not. We study the problem of crime because we do not want crime to develop. We want to find ways and means to reduce criminality.

The same thing is true for medical science. If a cancer expert studies cancer cells objectively, i.e., as they exist, and their influence on the human body, he does not bring his private bias into the study of cancer. That is medical science. But having done that he has to ask himself the question - does he want to promote cancer? Is the purpose of his science to promote cancer? The answer is no. In that sense there is no science, whether social or physical or natural, without morality.

However, a certain trend has developed in the West to separate science from morality. The scientists say that morality is not their business. They only study a subject, that's all. What happens later with the research is not their concern. That is the work of politicians and the administrators. That was the attitude of some scientists in connection with the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan in World War II. The scientists claimed they were only involved in physics and how to construct the bomb. How the bomb was used was not in their hands and it was not their business, implying thereby that they were indifferent to and unconnected with the use of the bomb as an instrument of destruction.

Not everyone in the West shares this opinion of research being apolitical and neutral. There are undoubtedly people in the West too who disagree with this amoral attitude of the functionaries. But they are in a minority. The majority follows this trend and this morality has been exported by them to our part of the world.



Ms Gloria Emeagwali, historian, USA, addresses the Penang group while Vimbai Chivaura and Kantibou Edjou look on.

Now some of our scientists and builders in the Third World are also adopting a similar attitude and this is another example of the captive mind. The builders of atomic weapons in Asian countries - I do not mention the countries but we all know who they are - must be made aware of the consequences of their research. The builders of land mines must know that they are maiming little children because land mines are not being used in war against soldiers, but in guerrilla warfare against civilians. Villages are mined just to isolate them. This is going on in Burma, in Afghanistan, in Africa. We all know how many children have been killed by land mines. But the scientists involved in making the land mines feel that this is not their business. It is the business of the politicians who are using the land mines. We should reject this kind of morality. This is what I mean when I say that the Third World should adopt an independent attitude, and not be captive either to their scientific concepts or to their conception of morality.

Another subject for study is to trace the historical origin of the captive mind. The origin of the captive mind is not parallel to colonialism. During the beginning of the colonial period there was no mental captivity. The phenomenon of mental captivity arose more or less in the nineteenth century, not before that. Before the nineteenth century there was no intensive intellectual contact of the colonized with the colonial power and there was no attempt by the colonial government to indoctrinate at this level. In the beginning they were only interested in making money.

A very clear manifestation of this phenomenon is in the history of British India. When the British came to India in the latter part of the eighteenth century, they had no vision of themselves as a colonial power. They were traders. The Dutch took control of Java in Indonesia in the eighteenth century. It was only in the latter part of the nineteenth century that there was intellectual discussion within the Dutch communities. Later, schools were started and they deliberately set up an institution called Balai Pustaka to

captivity is not an epiphenomenon of colonialism, although it started with colonialism.

However, now, this captivity has become worse. It became much more intensive and much more widespread after independence, when there was no more colonialism. So the development of the captive mind has nothing to do with its origin in colonialism. Now we are politically free, yet we are mentally enslaved. I believe that even if we are economically dependent on the West, it does not mean that we must also be mentally dependent. For instance, people in the West know how to assimilate certain things from the East, without becoming mentally dependent on the East. The very fact that you are using something from another country does not mean you must be mentally dependent. If you use Chinese chopsticks in America (USA has many Chinese restaurants and many Americans eat Chinese food) it does not mean that Americans are conditioned to think like the Chinese! But in our part of the world we are using a lot of western goods and at the same time imbibing western ideas unquestioningly.

Take some recent examples from Malaysia. For years and years, we have been continuing with development, without investigating the kind of development we need. We know that when a country develops, it must not avoid or neglect the agrarian structure. Europe, Japan and all the leading industrial countries were very careful to preserve their agrarian structure and they developed their industrial structure without harming the agrarian structure. But we are developing our industrial structure, without paying any attention to the agrarian structure. This is what I mean by imitation thinking.

Note:

The detail transcripts of Prof. Alatas' lecture, and of the Multiversity I and II meetings can be downloaded from the multiversity website: www.multiworld.org. Multiversity I is also available in the form of a book. Multiversity II is due to be published shortly.



Wasif Rizvi and Sheznaz Bano from Pakistan participated enthusiastically in the conference.

'White Studies' and the University in Ruins

Should we vacate the space or continue to dwell in the ruins

By YUSEF PROGLER

In the current university system, from history and political science to agriculture and health care, Western knowledge is the only knowledge. Cherokee scholar Ward Churchill aptly dubbed this amalgam of Western theory and method as "White Studies," which was his succinct way of identifying what might be more politely, but also more clumsily, referred to as a "Euro-American centric knowledge system." In any case, pursuing an education dominated by White Studies today means adhering to a set of theories and practices that were developed with Western modernity and spread by colonialism.

In addition to evaluating the content of the contemporary academic disciplines, one would have to consider the institutional structure of White Studies, which has enabled higher education to normalize narrow forms of Western knowledge.

Supposedly rooted in Western civilization by way of the Seven Greek Sciences, the Roman Quadrivium and the Enlightenment's Useful Arts, White Studies as presently configured in most modern universities assumes that the best way to control thought is to make sure that no one ever sees the big picture. Compartmentalization was perfected during the Manhattan Project, under the direction of General Leslie R. Groves, who later admitted that his main achievement was to compartmentalize, and thus control, the scientific research for the atomic bomb. During the Cold War, most universities in the West adopted this tactic. With the rather limited "independence" of all the formerly colonized nation states, local universities adopted or continued the compartmentalized structure of White Studies as their guiding and normative mode of thought and action.

Graduates with a degree in a White Studies academic discipline often use their limited sense of empowerment to reproduce Western modernity, sometimes finding solace in the pious fraud that Western knowledge is the sum total of human knowledge, or that since Asians and Africans may have had a hand in developing these sciences centuries ago they should continue to be enslaved by them now in their modern transmogrified forms.

The resulting pathological condition, often referred to as being "educated," means that one takes Western science as the arbiter of truth, even in matters of religion. It means that in order to think one must do so through the lens of the modern disciplines. It means that unlimited technological progress and economic growth are the keys to human happiness. It means that

quantity is more important than quality and that technique and efficiency must govern all aspects of a desacralized life. Those seeking guidance and prosperity through White Studies may find that the best they can attain is to keep their traditions in private and let the West do the rest in public. This is true for anyone attempting to live within or revive any number of traditional cultures, since most of the world is firmly ensconced today in a system created and maintained by the purveyors of White Studies.

Ward Churchill observed that if you look through university catalogues you will find departments and programs in African Studies, Native American Studies, Latino Studies, Islamic Studies, South Asian Studies, and

that journal were not writing only as academics, they were also writing as activists. And so, like activists, although they can be intellectually grounded, the main reason for putting forth the writing is a call to action.

It is not meant as an exercise in polite conversation between academics, but as a call to action, to do something. And so that is why it appears irreverent, too, because there is no need to join the polite parlour games that most academics play to maintain their status. It identifies the problem, succinctly and irreverently, as White Studies.

When faced with this regime of White Studies, one realizes that both the subject and the object of study will occur through the lens of what some have called the



Yusef Proglar addresses the Penang group on the ruins of the present university system

a whole host of thematic and area studies programs, except there is no White Studies. Why not? The reason why, according to Churchill, is because all higher education is White Studies. Therefore, it is an unnamed yet ubiquitous presence, and it is implicit in the entire system. Even in those ethnic studies programs can be found this dominant way of viewing the world, which Churchill calls succinctly, in the Native American tradition of parsimonious speech, White Studies, which also appears, perhaps intentionally, polemical and irreverent. His view of White Studies has been motivating the work for the past two years of the Multiworld Network and the Multiversity Group, but it also set me on a path towards critical self-discovery, and toward discovering indigenous perspectives on Western modernity.

However, I am resisting the urge to evaluate Churchill's article as a definitive statement on education and imperialism, or to judge it as a theoretically rigorous response to other academics who have written on the same topic. To me, it has very little to do with engaging in academic discourse. In fact, Ward Churchill and the other Native Americans who I read in

Eurocentric worldview, to use a phrase that might be more polite. All of the terms of reference, for ourselves as well as the world in which we live, are through this lens of White Studies.

So, if we are all subject to the discourse of White Studies as we dwell in higher education, we do not have many choices. John Mohawk, a Native American scholar, said that there are basically three options for colonized peoples, in terms of subjecthood to a colonial discourse. The first response is to become a good subject. A good subject means that you play by all the rules, you treat it with respect and reverence, and you do what you are supposed to do, you work within the hierarchy, you follow all the parameters, procedures and protocols of the system, and you are a good subject. The second response is to become a bad subject.

A bad subject means that you do not really question the foundations of the system, of the discourse, but you merely engage in quibbling over its details, arguing and perhaps even trying to wrestle some control away of the discourse from those who established it, much the way

nationalists tried to wrestle control of the state away from the colonialists. But, the bad subjects cannot really change much, they can just gain control, or they complain, or they argue, but they do not really get at the root of the problem, they do not alter the terms of the discourse, and so they more or less perpetuate the same colonial system.

But there is a third option, to continue with John Mohawk's reasoning, and that is to become a non-subject, to abandon the discourse completely, to "vacate the space," if you will, to give up on it. Now, granted, this third option is very difficult to pursue, but it is none the less, at least in my view, a viable option that ought to be pursued. ...Maybe some academics (need to become the next Edward Said and work from within the university system) can do that, but many of us cannot, first of all. Second of all, and more importantly, by staying the course and not vacating the space we are validating the system. We are in a sense paying allegiance by our very participation, by publishing in its journals, by teaching in its institutions, by sending our children to its schools, by seeking jobs and fame and fortune from within this system, we are supporting it, perpetuating it. So, *vacating the space is a way to force the system to fold in on itself, by removing the diversity that it needs in order to be a legitimate academic system. We have the power to withhold that diversity, and to reveal the system for what it is, which is White Studies, for all to see.*

Becoming a non-subject or vacating the space are not easy to do, and I am not saying that we all have to do that, and I will not chastise anybody for not doing that, but what I am saying is that they can and should be possible choices. After all, this is a call to action, to return to Ward Churchill's discussion of White Studies, and so it is not just an analysis.

What kind of action? I believe that we all recognize something is amiss in the university system, *something is amiss with social science curricula. So, if there is something amiss, then what is amiss and what do we want to do about it?* It is not as if we, or Ward Churchill or any one else, has suddenly discovered this problem. It has been happening, the system itself has now even recognized its own faults, its own uncertainties, its own contradictions, which means, in my mind, that this is an ideal time to act. There is a window of opportunity emerging from Western uncertainty, and this uncertainty has also been elucidated from within.

Multiversity: Work in progress

Multiversity Conferences 2007

Since January 2007, week long Multiversity Conferences are being held at Goa. These take place every month and are currently focused on the development of social science curricula. However, the discussions meander through very many other interesting areas. Food and bedding for outsiders are provided at the Multiversity office. There is a possibility of long walks with Vishram Gupte which could be enlightening. Enlightenment is possible in the Multiversity kitchen as well as the guests can witness the daily innovations of Gautham Sarang, the resident professor on many issues. He never went to school, hence his expertise is his experience and guaranteed original.

Finally, a team has started to work seriously on redesigning the social sciences curricula for the universities. Recently, we brought psychologist Sudhir Kakar into our scheme of concerns. In fact, there is much to report this time around.

The Multiversity II Conference at Penang, which highlighted the continuing destructive impact of Eurocentrism on our academic world, brought together individuals willing to work on redesign of social science curricula in specific areas including philosophy, psychology, sociology, political science and economics. Watch the multiversity website for more developments on this initiative.

A new on-line discussion group too has been setup for Multiversity. Please enroll yourself if you would like to participate on any of these discussions, you can subscribe to the group directly by looking up our website (www.multiworld.org) and not wait for us to send an invitation. We know many of you with much wisdom keep changing your email addresses and mobile phone numbers so as to escape from being watched, wise move. Keep us informed when you do that so that our contact list is kept updated, you never know we may have tips on your watchers!

It is inevitable that sooner or later the world moves towards the Multiversity way. Who wants a homogenous civilization made in the sole image of western man? To find more, write to the multiversity group at:

multiworld@googlegroups.com

A recent posting from the MSN Multiversity Group

Greetings one and all, we just completed a new update to the group, primarily the uploading of over fifty readings on a wide variety of topics. You can find them in the Documents section, loosely organized into the three main categories of Occidental Studies, Indigenous Knowledge and Schooling and Education. Here's a small sample of some of the titles:

- Anibal Quijano, *Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America*
- Fernando Tola, *Philosophy of Mind in the Yogacara Buddhist Idealistic School*
- Ali Shariati, *Civilization and Modernization*
- Wendy Brady, *Indigenous Australian Education and Globalization*
- Arun Agrawal, *Indigenous Knowledge and the Politics of Classification*
- Shikshantar, *Healing Ourselves from the Diploma Disease*
- Seyyed Hossein Alatas, *The Development of an Autonomous Social Science Tradition in Asia: Problems and Prospects*
- Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss And Recovery Of Self Under Colonialism*
- Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Occidentosis: A Plague From the West*

That's just a small sample, there are many more, so please stop by the group if you feel like doing some reading. We also added a small video clip, Gandhi on the Seven Deadly Social Sins, but due to upload restrictions on the site the available content is limited. However, now with the relatively easy availability of online streaming video sites, we plan to link to some content on those sites. More about this later...

Finally, we cleaned up the group a bit, especially removing the News section, which contained mostly outdated links to streaming news stories. Nowadays, of course, there are too many sites from which one can read the news, in all flavours. Asia Times Online (www.atimes.com) is worth a look, for example, but everyone likely has their own news preference.

Hope you find this update, and the group itself, useful. If you do, please consider inviting friends and colleagues to join. That's it for now, enjoy learning, with very best wishes to all.

Radical Politics and the Knowledge Dialogue initiated by Sunil Sahasrabudhey aims to take the knowledge debate to the people.

An excerpt from the current dialogue:

'What are the sources of strength of the people in the Age of Information, Globalisation and the New Empire? This is the same as asking what ways are open to the people to effectively deal with the powers of knowledge management, global markets and the American wars. Does knowledge in society constitute the ultimate source of value and strength of the people in their struggle for emancipation?'

Sounds interesting? Join the debate at the website <http://www.vidyaashram.org/>

The Gap Year College starts this summer at Kempty, Mussoorie, India.

Can work be a motivation in itself?

What should be the parameters for choosing my career... Money? Fame?

Do I want to compete or relate?

Who decides for me – the trend, marks, parents or myself?

What are the options for my future?

Do I study only for marks; or for the joy of knowing?

Have I ever really explored my self?

In today's society, education has been reduced to competing for the highest marks and gaining entry into top universities. The decision about one's future and one's career has been reduced to whatever happens to be the trend at that time and to whatever one expects will bring money and respect. As a result, the pressure on students has become overwhelming, with no time and space to actually discover themselves and what lifestyle and work will truly bring them happiness. The idea that the work they do could actually be a source of happiness and meaningfulness has often been lost.

The Gap Year College is an attempt to create spaces and opportunities that fill that void by guiding students on how to think, not what to think.

This is an attempt of SIDH, Mussoorie.

More about this initiative at:

<http://www.sidhsri.com/gyc/>

The age of colonialism may be over, but not that of neo-colonial captive minds in India as elsewhere in the former colonial territories.

Nations struggled for and won political liberation from imperialist thralldom. But their tertiary institutions of higher learning hardly ever (with rare indigenous exceptions) displayed any compelling urge to free themselves from the restrictive, euro centric disciplinary paradigms inherited from western universities, or to delve into their own

unique native spiritual, cultural and intellectual resources that, even if not altogether annulled, were rendered more or less otiose.

And it was precisely from the corridors of domestic academia that the dangerous and divisive infection of captive minds spreads to all fields of the public life of a once subject nation.'

From: 'Neo-Colonial Captive Minds' by Devan Nair, former President of Singapore.

Interviewing Sudhir Kakar on redesign of psychology courses



Sudhir Kakar (r) with Vishram Gupte of Multiversity at the former's residence in Goa

Our in-house or resident philosopher, Vishram Gupte, reports:

Dr. Sudhir Kakar is an Indian psychologist and psychoanalyst who has more than a dozen books to his name. He is loved in India and abroad for his original and insightful understanding of the social and cultural psychology of Indians. He is also a major exponent of the nature of the 'Indian Psyche' and has developed a culture-sensitive interpretation of the subject. Originally trained as a mechanical engineer, Kakar found himself forced to study economics for another five years before he decided to listen to his heart and become a novelist and a successful psychoanalyst.

Kakar is therefore a quintessential Multiversity phenomenon.

Few people know that Kakar and his wife have settled down permanently in Goa! Claude Alvares, Sheela (my wife) and I decided to interview him on multiversity themes, especially on the subject of why India does not teach its sons and daughters 'Indian psychology' when there is so much of it and why do we continue with slavish import of texts and concepts from American universities. Kakar agreed that the time had arrived to change things but did not envisage change in his own lifetime. (The full transcript of the interview with him will soon be posted on the Multiversity website.)

Multiversitylibrary.com: Cleaning the world 2854 times

The Multiversity Library was started with the objective of providing free access to good literature from third world country scholars to a global audience. The on-line library provides a collection of choicest books guaranteed to raise some questions in the reader's mind.

The free downloads of the books available at the Multiversity Library website commenced in June 2004. Between then and now, i.e., February 2007, there have been in all 2854 book downloads from the site which is quite a record, as it works out to an average of over three books being downloaded daily. The most popular downloads include Dharampal, Claude Alvares, Ashis Nandy, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ziauddin Sardar.

Recently, on the sad demise of Dr Seyyed Hossein Alatas, we have added *The Captive Mind* and *The Myth of the Lazy Native* to the list of books available. We have also posted the first real work of reverse anthropology in recent times: *The Danes are Like That?* The Multiversity Library is cleaning up the world in its own way!!!

Introducing new friends to Multiversity

Mid-February 2007, I was invited to address meetings organized by the Solidarity Youth Movement of Kerala and the Jamaat-e-Islami at Calicut, two organizations that appear to subscribe almost wholly to Multiversity goals.

The marshalling skills of these two bodies (the SYM is a student wing of the Jamaat) were clearly impressive to behold. A well-disciplined force of 1000 people assembled at Allepey and more than 50,000 on the Calicut beach (in the same city where Dharampal, Mohamed Idris and I had assembled in 1998 with several hundred others to protest and successfully prevent the Portuguese proposals to celebrate 500 years of Vasco da Gama). More than 60% of the participants at the meeting were women!

The SYM has rapidly expanded its influence over Kerala's youth during the last two years. The movement defines its coordinates differently: it challenges students to re-think their role in education and to get back to being of some use to society instead of being parasites or burdens. It is therefore extremely keen to link up with Multiversity.

The Jamaat is an unusual organization itself. It was founded by Sayyid Maududi, who once declared that all colleges and universities are nothing but modern day slaughter-houses. The Jamaat's literature is mostly in Malayalam and continuously challenges the violence of Western civilization in all its forms. They have a number of mass circulation magazines and videos.

During the events, I also met six students from the Wayanad Muslim Orphanage. Bright guys. They told me that they were required by their curriculum to spend half their time outside school walls, meeting, discussing and learning from guys like me.

Who was telling us the other day that the Muslim community insists on remaining backward? These people are already far ahead of their time.

Claude Alvares

Teaching philosophy in Africa

Check out this paper by Mesembe Itaedet talking the MV language in Africa: 'A paper on the teaching of Western philosophy in African Universities.' Mesembe is a Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria.

'The aim of this paper is to question the approach to teaching western philosophy in African universities. In the light of the results of recent research efforts of African scholars it has become known that the philosophical postulations of the likes of Aristotle, Bentham, Hegel and Nietzsche provided the logic that inspired and justified colonization and slavery in Africa. It has also been affirmed that Aristotle, Locke, Kant, Hume and Hegel were pure and absolute racists; yet in teaching their philosophies in African universities, we treat them with so much prestige and respect. The paper contends that in teaching western philosophy in African universities, the paucity of political content is obvious. Consequently, the paper calls for a radical overhaul of the whole epistemological paradigm underlying the current educational system based on an African centred curriculum anchored on a critique of Eurocentrism.' We welcome Africa to the Multiversity revolution.

The article is available at the website <http://www.frasouzu.com/>

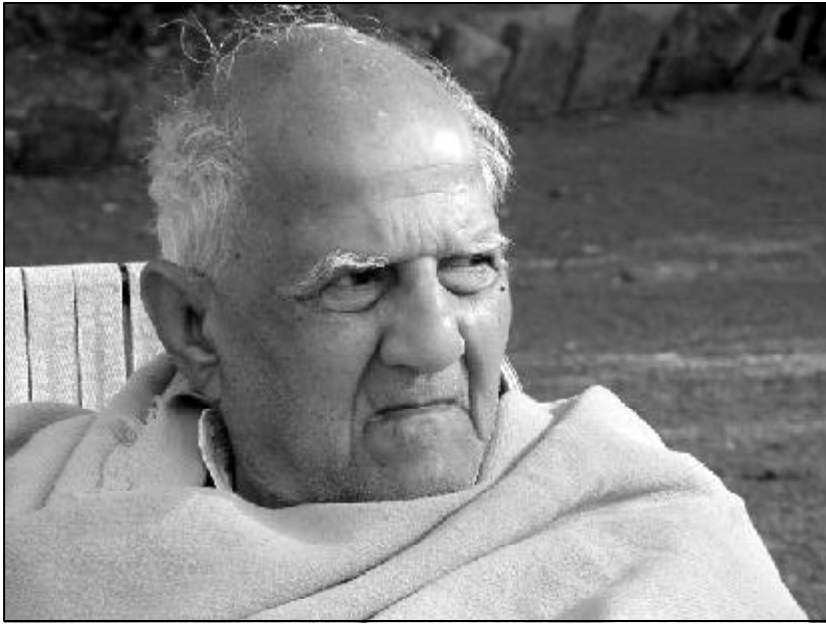
Vishram Gupte

Dharampal 1922-2006

Harnessing Gandhi as a beacon for the new universities of India

By Dharampal

Multiversity will sorely miss one of its most important counsellors and guides. Dharampal's work – which upturned many hoary perceptions of Indian society propagated by British colonial historians and their Indian spawn – will inspire generations. He was a member of Multiversity's advisory council.



Dharampal: a few months before he expired at Sewagram, the ashram with which Mahatma Gandhi was closely associated for several years.

Born in 1922, Dharampal had his first glimpse of Mahatma Gandhi around the age of eight. Though he underwent western education and college, he started moving towards the swaraj option of Gandhiji and in 1940 started wearing khadi – a practice he followed all his life. In 1942, he was present as a fervent spectator at the Quit India Session of the Congress in Bombay and he thereafter joined the Movement. He was active in it till arrested in April 1943. After two months in police detention, he was released but banned from Delhi. In August 1944, he was introduced to Mirabehn by his friends. He joined her soon thereafter, at what came to be known as the Kisan Ashram, situated midway between Roorkee and Haridwar. He was closely associated with her work from then onwards and met her in the last two weeks before her death in 1982.

In 1947–48, he had come in close contact with Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia and with numerous younger friends in Delhi and was involved with the relief efforts for those displaced by partition. He was a member of the Indian Cooperative Union which was founded in 1948. The following year while in England, he got married to Phyllis who was English. Afterwards, they both decided to live in India. In 1950, the community village of Bapugram near Rishikesh began to be formed. Dharampal and Phyllis lived in it till 1953

before moving to London again.

He was back in Delhi again from early 1958 to 1964. He now took up the post of General Secretary of the Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (AVARD). For about two years, he also was the Director of Research of All India Panchayat Parishad and spent more than a year in Tamilnadu collecting material that was later published as the 'Madras Panchayat System.'

Earlier, in 1962, he had already published a smaller book containing the proceedings of the Indian Constituent Assembly relating to the discussion on the subject of 'The Panchayat as a Basis of India's Polity.' From Madras he had to move to London in early 1966 for family reasons.

By then he was also keen on a detailed study of the Indo-British encounter during the 18th to 19th centuries. This time he stayed on in London till 1982, but visited India in between. In England, he did not have much of an income. There was also a family to support.

But notwithstanding all this, he became a regular visitor to the India Office and the British Museum and spent most of his time pouring over the archives. Photocopying required money. Oftentimes, old manuscripts could not be photocopied. So, he copied them in long hand, page after page, millions of words, day after day. Thereafter, he

There have been rumours that Sevagram might be turned into a university. That is a good idea. In recent years it has been the trend to set up chairs, departments, etc. on Gandhian thought in certain universities. A few institutes of study and research in the name of Mahatma Gandhi have also been set up. Even assuming that these have functioned well under the rules that govern them and the environment in which they are located, it is doubtful whether they could have escaped the intellectual sterility that surrounds them. Their contribution could only be meagre even under the best of circumstances. What is actually required is to analyse the thought, approach and words of Gandhiji and incorporate them within the curriculum of most academic disciplines in the humanities as well as in the sciences. Sadly this has so far not been attempted.

Perhaps it was not easy to initiate this process till the *Collected Works* were available. Now that they are, it becomes the responsibility of the Indian academic fraternity to give Mahatma Gandhi in its teaching and research programmes the same attention that it does to western philosophers, theorists, philosophers of science, political scientists, psychologists, economists, etc. It is possible that the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi may not be able to withstand the strain of modern academic scrutiny. But Gandhiji stood for truth all his life. If by scrutiny of his life one were able to establish that the truth value of what he said and did had only an ephemeral quality and even less permanence, one would serve not only truth but Gandhiji as well. A beginning in this direction would automatically lead us to the exploration of the roots of Gandhiji's approach and ideas. It would then only be a matter of time before Indian academics acquired an indigenous base strong and secure enough to enter into mutually beneficial

scholarly exchanges with other civilisations.

However just one university is not enough. If we are serious in wanting to acknowledge and preserve Gandhiji's memory, there must be not one but several universities in his name. Gandhiji gave us the vision to enable us to live our lives distinctly different from the Western way of life. Gandhiji believed that it is only within the framework of Indian tradition and culture that it was possible to create the socio-economic systems necessary to realise the vision of a clean and equitable society. He spent his entire life attempting to design systems that would be appropriate to the vision of Indian *sanatana* thought in contemporary times. It is true that he was not able to fill in all the detailed outlines of these systems. But his vision was so powerful he was able to infuse new spirit into the public life of India. It is the power of that dream that filled the people with so much confidence that they were successfully able to end British colonial rule.

Gandhiji completed his work by ensuring that India became independent. It is our task now to raise the structures of appropriate systems in order to realise his dream. Gandhian universities would be able to give a concrete shape to Gandhiji's dream by concentrating on the culture and traditions of this country and also by focussing on acquiring deeper knowledge of our neighbours in the east and the west, including the countries of Africa. Gandhiji knew that a lot of thinkers and doers would be needed to establish the infrastructure for the promotion of his ideas. Gandhiji had even advised the Gandhi Seva Sangh to work as a postgraduate study centre. Now we can make his wishes come true by establishing several such universities. (Oct. 2, 1986)

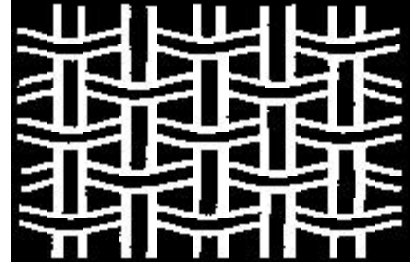
(From: *Understanding Gandhi*, by Dharampal, OIP)

would have the copied notes typed. He thus retrieved and accumulated thousands of pages of information from the archival record. When he returned to India, these notes – which filled several large trunks and suitcases – proved to be his most prized possessions.

They would become the basis of much of his writing and would later be brought together in the 5-volume *Collected Writings*. Rarely has a single individual done so much to change the face of Indian history and the perceptions of Indians about their past.

Download Dharampal's Collected Writings in five volumes from the multiversity library: www.multiversitylibrary.com

There is also now a site dedicated exclusively to Dharampal and his work: www.dharampal.net.



A curriculum for farmers' children

Do children of farmers need separate schools?

A very interesting question to ask, but the answers are not that clear.

It is a fact of life today that farming is a despised profession, considered fit only for people with no education. Or for persons unable to make the grade to qualify for engineering or medicine or computers. Doing agriculture is considered a boring or low-grade activity. The central message of today's greatly distorted system of education is that agriculture is meant for persons who are failures in some profound manner. Or for those who did not go to school.

It's crazy but true that the people who produce the rice or wheat and vegetables that go twice (sometimes thrice) a day into our bellies we consider uneducated! Or untrained! Or plain stupid!

Will this ever change? What are the chances it will?

Why do children of farmers go to urban-oriented schools in which the curriculum practically bans all talk of soil, land, crops? Why don't children of the urban classes get any training in growing their own food?

Medicine deals with people who are suffering or ill. Engineering, as we know it, is often completely contrary to living systems. Computers? Well, ever heard of a computer that could grow a crop of rice?

Agriculture deals with life, with living things. It deals with living soils, microbes, insects, plants, seeds, soil fauna including termites, earthworms, snakes, frogs, a whole community of living things.

So how come most of our children are actually put into schools where they see no life? The only time they encounter life is when they reach a science class and are asked to kill frogs or dissect cockroaches.

They are asked to sit for fourteen years on hard wooden benches made from the flesh of once living trees, now dead wood. They read their text from pages also made from dead trees or bamboo. All living creatures really are banished from normal classrooms, urban or rural.

There is no child we know that was not interested in animals or worms or things that move.

Yet we will try to ensure that when we are 'educating' them, the knowledge we impart is dry, sterile, lifeless, theoretical, bookish and really of very little use for earning a living. In fact, we are all in agreement that if a person goes to school, he/she develops the most atrocious value system, becomes generally a parasite, dependent on the rest of the world to survive.

The people who face this dilemma most cruelly are organic farmers. By nature and practice, every organic farmer is a creative individual. There was no one from university to teach him/her because university folk are all steeped in the use of chemicals, which organic farmers avoid like the plague. So each organic farmer learnt the methods useful on his/her farm themselves.

The children of organic farmers have therefore become an urgent focus of work at Taleemnet.

This in a country where agriculture was a great tradition and so sustainably practised it lasted several millenia without harming the soil or the life in it.

Touched by the demand of organic farmers that something be done about this alarming situation, Taleemnet, the Natural Farming Institute and the Organic Farming Association of India (OFAI) initiated a workgroup of organic farmers led by persons who

have themselves kept their children out of school, and asked it to create a fresh curriculum of studies that will not only generate intense love for the land and agriculture among rural children, but also enable them to deal successfully with the modern world and its demands including certification at high school and graduate levels, if and when desired by the student concerned.

The workgroup on curriculum design for rural children is constituted as under:

- Gopalkrishnan and Vijayalekshmi Sarang, Kerala (coordinators)
- Ms Mona Patrao, Redstone Farm, Maharashtra
- Ms Juli Cariappa, Karnataka
- Raghu babu, Andhra Pradesh
- K.B.Jinan, Kerala
- Dharendra Soneji, Gujarat
- Ali Manikfan, Tamilnadu
- Ms M. Revati, Tamilnadu
- Ms Meenakshi, Tamilnadu
- Dr L.S. Saraswati, Chennai, Tamilnadu
- Shivaji Kaganekar, Belgaum, Karnataka
- Arvind Gupta, Maharashtra

This is a great group, with vastly experienced and committed individuals, most of whom have themselves kept their children out of schools because of the way in which these institutions distort young minds.

Gopalkrishnan and Vijayalekshmi Sarang have taken their work seriously. They have, with the assistance of OFAI, travelled to several institutions dealing with rural education, including alternative schools and held many discussions. They have now generated a report which has been sent to over a hundred individuals concerned with the problem. The report is also posted on the NFI website (a constituent of the www.multiworld.org website).

Those who would like to be kept abreast of this work should email or write Taleemnet at the Goa office. If they are keen to attend the workshop (most likely scheduled for July 2007 in Tamilnadu), they should inform the office about that as well.

On Children

And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said, 'Speak to us of Children.'

And he said:

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts.

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.

Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;

For even as he loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the bow that is stable.

From *The Prophet*
by Khalil Gibran

Important note:

The materials referred to in this section can be downloaded from www.multiversitylibrary.com. One can also access them at www.unesco.org/education/literacy. 'Vernacular educators,' '...For they have their own thoughts' and 'Multiversity' are books that can also be ordered at modest prices from Other India Bookstore, Next to New Mapusa Clinic, Mapusa 403 507 Goa, India

Alt-Ed-India--Taleemnet Postal Resource and Library

The tribe of home educators and self learners has seen a steady growth in India in recent times. The inadequacy of the school system and substandard, uninspiring curricula have both driven parents to take the plunge of taking the education of their children in their own hands. The children at Gurukula Ahmedabad are all school walkouts pursuing their own individual interests in depth. Oovi of Red Stone Farm, Panchgani, and Shivram Narayanan of Vasco, (featured in Kamirithu issues I and III) are self learners pursuing their interests in teaching, and origami and music respectively. Gauri of Calicut got wise very young and refused to continue with school after class I. Her younger sister Dhani has not shown any curiosity to see what the inside of a school looks like. Sakhi, 13, from Nasik has taken a break from school this year to explore her own interests.

It is apparent from these instances that children are exploring their own ways of learning. Millions yet are trying to ride two boats. They go through Herculean tasks everyday of attending a full fledged day school and pursue their interest in art, music, dance, theatre thereafter till late hours at night. There are on the other hand youngsters, especially sports enthusiasts, who register with a school but are traveling through most of the year participating in various tournaments. Since most seasons end in January, they spend the two months of February and March on academics and sail through the end of year examinations brilliantly.

Support for home educating parents (mostly in India) is available on the internet at <http://www.alternativeeducationindia.net>. Clive Elwell, who taught for a time at Blue Mountains School, Ooty and CFL, Bangalore is the moderator of the mailing and discussion group, alt-ed-india@yahoo.com. The site and group are primarily for parents of home learners in India, but others interested in meaningful education and alternatives are also part of the group. The site has quite a lot of information about alternative education and schools in India. So if you are an undecided parent, a home educator or just keen to learn yourself, this is a good site to visit and an excellent mailing group to join.

Alt-Ed-India and Taleemnet are jointly offering a facility of postal library service for parents of home schoolers interested in using David Horsburgh's books some of which are out of print and others difficult to obtain in the open market. This is operated from the Taleemnet office at Goa, which is part of the Multiversity project.

Membership of the library is Rs 300/- and a postal service advance of Rs.300/- is collected along with the membership. The library works as follows: Rs.300/- is the non-refundable deposit. The service advance is credited to your name and used towards xerox and postage of books you wish to receive. You may receive books worth Rs. 300/- in photocopy costs and postage. For more books the service advance would have to be re-remitted.

The postal library has been started with books contributed by Clive Elwell, Neti Shrinivasan and the Taleemnet team.

The postal library leaves its doors open to membership. Also, anyone on a visit to Goa is most welcome to visit the office and browse through our resource centre.

For details, contact Taleemnet or Alt-Ed India (<http://www.alternativeeducationindia.net/>). Visit the Taleemnet online at www.multiworld.org/taleemnet for more details and periodic updates.

Learning Source Book project of Other India Press

The Learning Source Book is being envisaged as a resource book to assist parents and the educator community to find solutions to the predicament faced by most with regards to educating children. It is hoped that the readers will find answers and gain the strength to chart a path that will ultimately help children work towards their own aspirations and dreams.

Towards understanding this, in 2003 and 2004 the Taleemnet team undertook long journeys through parts of India meeting people, visiting schools/centers, interviewing several educators, parents, home learners, non schoolers, walkouts. In 2005 we organized a meeting of path breaking educators working within communities and in 2006 published the learning wisdom of twelve vernacular educators (both report and book are available from OIB and at the taleemnet section in our website as downloads www.multiworld.org/taleemnet).

This process of learning for ourselves has brought to light the fact ***that people of India have truly moved away from depending on the Govt. and the organized institutions and have taken the responsibility of educating their children in their own hands*** (even though in most cases they may still continue to send their children to school).

From the remotest of villages to the largest metropolis, learning has moved to spaces outside the mainstream school, be it the popular neighborhood teacher or the carefully designed and professionally handled tuition, art, music, craft centres or the final blow coming in from the fast growing community of home educators, post school and gap year programmes.

In this background, Taleemnet has now recommenced work on publishing 'A Learning Source book', which will be a hand book on learning experiences and learning resources available for parents and educators. More details on this project, write to taleemnet@gmail.com

Some interesting websites and weblinks

Here is a list of web links that will be of interest to home-educators, teachers, schools and institutions working with children:

1. Learning Network, India: www.learningnet-india.org
2. Educare: www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/newresources.html
3. Home learning: www.alternativeeducationindia.net
4. Books for children: www.vivekafoundation.org
5. Learning Resources: www.fingertips.sutradhar.org
6. Journal of the Krishnamurti Schools: www.journal.kfionline.org
7. Education across the border: www.sef.org.pk
8. Gobartimes: www.gobartimes.org/

Samdhong Rinpoche brings changes to Tibetan education

Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche, the austere but blunt speaking Buddhist monk who has been re-elected for a second term (by direct vote) as the Prime Minister of Tibet's Government in Exile, has been making dedicated attempts to re-orient the thinking and practice behind Tibetan schooling.

Prof. Rinpoche, who is one of Multiversity's Advisory Council members, has been inviting Multiversity people like Claude Alvares and Ramu Manivannam for weeklong discussions with their teachers and principals, with a view to encouraging dramatic reform of the existing Tibetan educational system.

In line with the new policies adopted by the Tibetan Parliament, the education department has opened models schools where many of the more liberalised methods of assisting children learn are being used. The model school has been set up to follow the principles of natural learning.

The Tibetans have also become avid viewers of the spate of nai-taleem films that are now stocked in the film libraries of Shikshantar and Taleemnet (*see story below*). The administration finds that these films are extremely useful in introducing new ideas of what the schools of the future should be to their present groups of teachers, old and new.

Films for those who want a different kind of school

Shikshantar and Taleemnet have a ready stock of films on alternative schools and alternative learning institutions and practices. These are available for public viewing, as part of education programmes or for conventional schools who wish to introduce more humane and productive learning methods in their institutions.

The Nai Taleem Film Festival 2006–2007 has been put together to inspire a larger vision of learning that includes dignity, imagination, healthy community and deep wisdom for today's world. Although discussions on 'quality education' are taking place in many corners of the world, for the most part children and families remain trapped in consumeristic and indoctrinating frameworks of factory-schooling. We are told over and over again that there are no alternatives.

This film festival hopes to elevate conversations on human learning by remembering *nai taleem*. It seeks to bring insights and practical experiments back into our conscious minds and everyday conversations. The collection of films (over 12 hours) brings forth different spaces, processes and experiments of deep learning happening in all parts of the world.

The collection includes feature films (such as *Children of Heaven* and *Rabbit-Proof Fence*), independent shorts and documentary films (on experiments such as *Kanavu* and *Democratic Schools*).

The Nai Taleem Film Festival invites people of all ages come together, to consider anew who we are, how we learn best, what kind of society we seek, and what future we hope for. It has been already hosted in 30 different communities around India, and another 10 around the world (in halls, community centers, offices and living rooms). Write to Shikshantar for a set of films from the 2006-2007 Festival or for the latest word on the upcoming 2007-2008 Festival <shikshantar@yahoo.com>. The festival will take place where you want to organise it. Shikshantar will despatch the films.

Aksharnandan

Some day all schools will be like this



Children engrossed in learning at Aksharnandan

Aksharnandan is the brainchild of Vidya Patwardhan, a quiet and focused lady from Pune (western India). Vidyatai (elder sister) as she is fondly called by the children of the school, believes that human-scale education needs schools that are small and firmly anchored in their communities, thus connecting the classroom with the world outside and integrating nature and everyday life situations into all aspects of learning. Learning here is a dynamic and holistic process. Like life itself!

Located near the famous Chatushringi temple on Senapati Bapat Road, Pune, away from the city bustle, yet centrally placed, Aksharnandan has a strength of around four hundred and fifty children, from all economic backgrounds.

The most striking feature of Aksharnandan is its walls. 'Our walls speak, says Vidyatai, and truly they do! The corridors and class room walls are adorned with jute covered boards that display the art, drawings, crafts, poems, embroidery, interviews, creative writing and any number of interesting works that the children have created as part of their learning programme.

The emphasis in the different subjects taught at the school is, as far as possible, on the connectedness and relatedness of everything. No topic is viewed in isolation. For instance, a lesson on letter writing would concern itself not only with content, style, and grammar, but would end up with a visit to the post office, purchasing postage, mailing the letter, understanding postal sorting, pin codes, postman's duties, and also what happens to undelivered mail. In addition, the lesson would deal with different types of writing materials, paper, pens, ink, it would also touch on electronic mail and internet, and, for good measure, would also explore the pleasures of philately!

Or, if the class is being introduced to water, the learning would revolve around the uses of water, its origin, the water cycle, water wastage, water dependent life and enterprise, water pollution; water and its influence on human civilizations, stories and songs related to water etc. Such an approach relates diverse subjects such as maths, science, social sciences, art and culture. This is an unfragmented holistic approach to learning.

No doubt this means that the teachers have to do a lot of pre-planning.

Teachers at the school elaborate: 'We teach because of a strong conviction in what we do. Lessons are prepared during the holidays. Most of the notes on teaching and methodology are picked up from Vidyatai's personal jottings. There is a basic lesson plan, which may be abandoned midway in favour of the students' interest and inclination. Pre-school teachers prepare for the next day's class, after school hours, everyday. In pre-school, the children primarily learn through their senses: pre-reading, writing and experiencing numbers concretely and through playway methods is emphasized at this stage. Actual reading and writing are introduced much later.'

The school has single section classes with a maximum of 40 students and two teachers in each class upto the fourth. The school has open classroom space upto Std VII with small stools stacked in a corner of the room, to be used and put away as required. This leaves the floor uncluttered with furniture, and the space is utilized for multiple activities – for example, a game with kids running around or a story telling session with the children sprawled all over the floor and some huddled close to the teacher (who is addressed as *tai*).

It is only after class VII that the classroom has regular

furniture as the children start to prepare for the Class X board examination. All footwear is neatly left on the shelves outside the classroom and bags are piled in a corner of the class. If writing has to be done, children pick up one of the coloured stools from a corner of the classroom and promptly put it away after use.

At Aksharnandan the teacher is hardly heard – it is the happy chatter of children, deeply involved in whatever is holding their interest at that moment that filters through.

Children are not given any grades upto class IV. From class V to VII they receive grades. Marks are awarded from class VIII onwards, which is when the students start preparing for the Class X board examination. However, there is ongoing evaluation throughout, beginning with *balwadi* (kindergarten). The evaluation system is mainly for the reference of teachers and is not even revealed to the child or their parents, except from Class VII onwards. Examinations (except for the senior level) are not time bound exercises and children are encouraged to take their time as the teachers are interested in assessing understanding capacity and not speed. The question paper is not based on text books alone but on all the learning experiences the child has been offered – be they project works, travel and excursion visits, guest lectures etc.

In its search for an activity to engage the mind, hand and heart, Aksharnandan found the answer in cooking. Food and cooking are central themes in the learning process at Aksharnandan and part of the learning is arranged around cooking. It starts from primary level with simple mixing of salads, making of fruit juice, etc and by the time the students reach senior level they are quite adept at taking care of their nutritional needs. The students

maintain a small organic vegetable garden and any shortages are made good by purchasing organic vegetables from the fields of parents who farm.

The school promotes a curriculum and methodology that is deeply rooted in local traditions and culture. It uses an integrated and holistic approach to learning, with emphasis on experience and experimentation, cooperation rather than competition. It aims at inculcating in children a love for learning, fearlessness, belief in oneself and one's abilities and it nurtures a spirit of excellence in the broad sense, in that it includes caring, responsibility and constructive use of one's faculties.

The medium of instruction in Aksharnandan is Marathi, which is the local language and the mother tongue of the children. Aksharnandan believes that every language has its own beauty and is a window to a particular culture. No language is superior over the other. Hence, Hindi, English and Sanskrit are informally introduced at an early age, through song and story and are learned with equal diligence and respect. Aksharnandan believes that a truly universal mind can grow only when it strikes strong roots in the indigenous soil.

Vidyatai sums it all up when she says, 'Our success in carving out a niche for ourselves as an innovative school has been possible because of a committed core group of educationists, backed by a team of enthusiastic teachers and actively involved parents.'

Learn more about Aksharnandan from the book, 'Vernacular educators' or download the book from multiversitylibrary.com



Vidya Patwardhan, the soul behind Aksharnandan

Vernaculator educators

Profiling some vernacular educators and their innovations from across the land.

The complete profile is available in the publication 'Work and Wisdom of Vernacular Educators from India' (other india bookstore) or downloadable from Multiversitylibrary.com

Shivaji Kaganikar

My people are herdsmen engaged in sheep rearing. We are poor with negligible literacy levels. Thanks to my parents I was destined to have an education at the local village school.

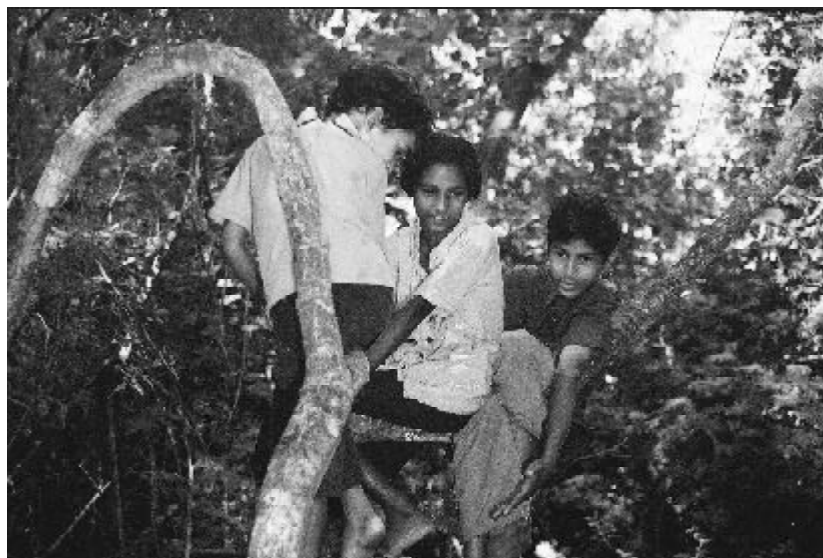
I wished to train to be a primary or middle school teacher. However this would be relevant only if there were schools. In the remote areas of the country and around my town there were no schools at all. What good would my training be as teacher, if there were no schools? The situation looked so hopeless that I decided to go my own way.

I chose a village with no literates and decided to live and work among its people. I had the support of people involved in the Sarvodaya movement and in my own village there lived a Gandhian freedom fighter, Shri Sadashiv Rao Bhosle, an ex-MLA who had started work in about 35 schools and was a tremendous support for my aspirations.

I was also associated with Jana Jagaran, a local missionary group. In ten years, Jana Jagaran had started night schools in thirty-five villages and was able to achieve 40% literacy. One question however kept playing in my mind: how would this work of literacy help uplift the social status of these villages. How would this work bring about positive changes in this society? While working in these areas I gained valuable insight into how the education system works.

My interactions with children gradually revealed to me that school and education *per se* were grossly overrated and in fact inadequate to deal with the realities of life. Even if there are government schools, teachers, and children go to school, there is no learning of any consequence happening in the school.

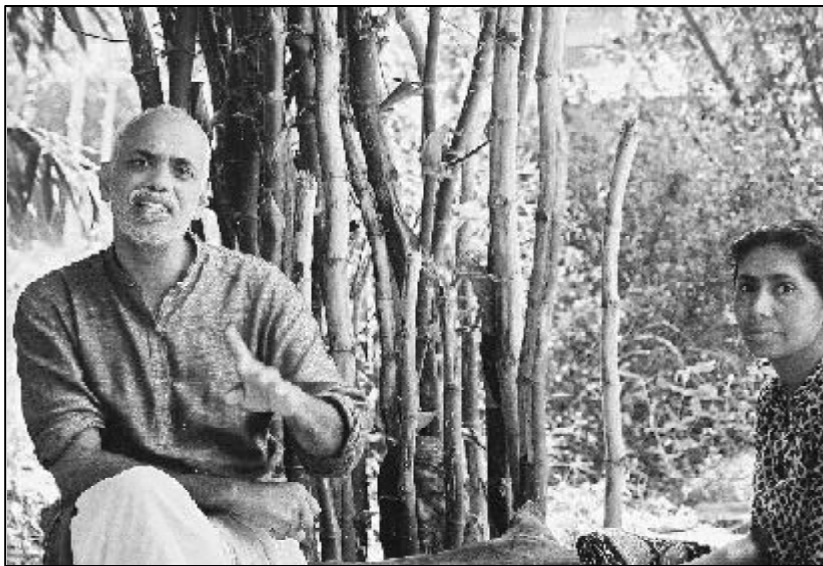
For example, I decided to start teaching math to some of the children of standard eighth, ninth and tenth. I would choose a village and visit it twice a week to teach math. The situation was such that even if the boys were in standard eight we would have to begin with simple addition, subtraction, multiplication and division and only then move forward. I thought to give them a good grounding in math. But with time, even this exercise began to fail. The children would come to me and ask for the math problems to be solved. They



Children of Sarang find a natural classroom for their fantasies



Vidya Patwardhan (Aksharnandan) with Rama (Vidyodaya)



Kanavu pioneers, K.J. Baby and Shirley at their unusual learning centre for the tribal children of Wynad

were not interested to solve it themselves but wanted to be spoon-fed with ready-made solutions. It was this kind of indifference to learning on the part of children themselves that made me conclude that learning in Indian villages should be a self-initiated, self-motivated endeavour.

Jane Sahi, Sita School, Bengaluru

Says Jane: At Sita School we try to create an environment which stimulates the child not just intellectually, but also emotionally, creatively and socially.

We try to draw on the feeling and imagination of the child in

a broad non-sectarian and spiritual sense.

We try to cultivate a sense of wonder, an appreciation of the beautiful and the healthy. At the same time, we actively cultivate cooperation, sharing and respect for the other and towards nature and material things, to foster a just and balanced way of life.

Jane suggests that it is difficult to prescribe a definitive method or a set of methods for alternative education. If education is to be vital and meaningful it has to be organic, and open to change. The basis is not so much a prescribed method but a relationship, where individuals can constantly respond to themselves, to others and to their environment. Each child is so specific and unique that we have to evolve ways to deal with each one of them.

Lila 'T ai' Patil, Srujan Anand Vidyalyaya, Kolhapur

A teacher to the core, Lila Patil has been forging boldly ahead with her experiments in primary education. Lila is unique in many ways. Her teaching methods, her convictions, her insights, her rapport with the students and her faith in education as a means of social transformation is plain to see as one gets acquainted with her work.

She has been meticulously documenting her experiments in primary education in Marathi, her native language and the language of her students. She is an acclaimed writer in Marathi and has penned more than dozen books, all devoted to her favorite theme: primary education. Writes Lilatai:

'Children learn in the mother tongue because language is an indication of freedom, thought and expression. If one loses one's language, in a way freedom is lost.

'In education circles everybody talks about motivating the child. What does this mean? - Does it mean: to encourage, to stimulate? Some one said that one should allow the world to enter the classroom and the child would learn on its own.

'We noticed children are by nature creative intellectually, reflective and responsive to the outside world. It looks like schools are meant to kill all these and shut off this natural inclination.'

K J Baby and Shirley, Kanavu, Kerala

The line between fact and fiction is hazy for K.J. Baby who first dreamt his ideal world, then fictionalized it in a novel and later made the dream possible in real life.

Kanavu, meaning 'dream', is a self-sustaining, self-sufficient tribal commune initiated by K J Baby and his wife Shirley in a village named Nadavayal in Wayanad District, Kerala.

The resident commune comprises about 50 persons. children, teachers, elders and young growing families living on the banks of Narasipuzha.

Firmly believing that modern education would in no way emancipate the tribals, Baby and Shirley made no attempt to persuade the tribal children to go to school, but gave them Kanavu – their own milieu to grow, learn and relate.

Gopalakrishnan and Vijayalekshmi Sarang, Kerala

Vijayalekshmi: Instead of educating their own children, parents today invest and depend on outside agencies like schools for their children's education. It is not then surprising that criminals have university degrees! Most people who occupy public office have criminal and corrupt connections. If these are our representatives, it speaks for the larger society. Even noble professions like medicine and judiciary today operate on kickbacks.

Gopalakrishnan: School is where children learn to lie, compete and copy and this is carried on manifold into adult life. Only a minority is living a life of values, but the vast majority is pushing one another to indulge in nefarious and undesirable activities.

If we take a particle of water, it should show the quality and nature of water. Similarly, even the smallest units of society should be democratic in nature. Families are the micro particles of society. The offices and institutions are the molecules. So democracy should start from the family and classrooms. Otherwise, even after another thousand years we will not be a truly democratic people. That means democracy should start from the family itself. The relationship between the members of the family should be democratic. The work should be balanced.

We may talk about democracy but in practice the father is the dictator in the family, teacher is the king of the classroom and head master is the emperor of the school. How can there be democracy? This is not education. It is mere literacy. Education is something more meaningful and related with real life.



Learning within the bosom of nature with Jane Sahi



Shivaji Kaganikar in a discussion with Dileep Kamat, his close associate in many of the experiments in rural learning



The Vidyodaya school nurtured by Ram and Rama gathers for its assembly.

So the curriculum should include everything related with real life. That is the kind of school and curriculum we have in mind.

The Sarang's are online at www.saranghills.org

Vikasana, Bengaluru

Vikasana means a blossoming, an unfolding. When Malathi started Vikasana, she intended precisely this: to provide a space where the village children could enjoy their childhood and simultaneously allow their talents to blossom and develop.

Malathi has devoted her life to teaching and working with rural children ever since. She observes:

'Vikasana is the result of my teacher training experience with David Horsburgh. David started training teachers in 1975. I was one of them. The purpose of the training was to prepare individuals with the right skills who in turn would start their own small schools in villages.

'Our in-depth training was for a year. It was very rigorous. David started from scratch, slowly and carefully going through each aspect: curriculum, methodology, learning aids documentation, reflection, assessment, arts, crafts, drama, music, construction.'

K.B. Kulkarni, Chitramandir

'KB Sir,' as he was fondly known, passed away at 87, on March 11, 2007 at Belgaum. KB was honoured with the Sahitya Academy award in 1974. His best contribution is the generation of artists, writers and poets he inspired in Karnataka, Maharashtra and Goa during the sixty odd years that he left the doors of Chitramandir open to artistic, intellectual, scientific, logical and philosophic dialogue. Nehru centre, Mumbai held a week long exhibition of his work in January this year.

He wrote: 'Art is like a language; it must be learnt before composing a poem in that language. But in art schools in India today, they are teaching the students to compose poetry without knowing the language....the main obstacle to art education, or for that matter to any kind of education is that teachers try to teach pupils what they think is right or wrong. In the existing pattern of education, children are not allowed to think for themselves.

Discipline is not separate from one's personality and this must slowly be made to grow into you so that yoga, a phase of deep involved activity, develops. It is a kind of meditation, where the artist and the work become one. They are no longer separate entities. This period is important, as it is a phase of high productivity when the waves on the mind become silent and only the work/ the art/ the creation remains. This gives happiness. Education and learning must be a thing of happiness.

Vidyodaya, Gudalur

When we had only our two children to educate, lessons. on some days meant reading a story at bed time, writing and drawing in the afternoons and so on. The choice of activity depended on the children's energy levels, receptivity and readiness for work. This changed with others joining in. We could not continue the previous arrangement of any time class and unstructured activity. I had to develop a structure to engage them for the day and also provide for academic pursuits based on their age, grade and ability. And there a school was born. We named it Vidyodaya.

E ducating differently...

Some voices from the Valpoi (Goa) meeting of pathbreaking educators. The complete material can be downloaded from www.multiversitylibrary.com or ordered from Other India Bookstore (search for the title, '...for they have their own thoughts' at the site).

Bhuvan Pathak, Kasauni

What I learnt as a child was because the entire village was my learning space: the mountains, rivers, farms, trees, animals, and people. I try to emulate this through the *Jeevan shalas* that we have started. In the *Jeevan shala* the entire village is the child's learning space.

I do not believe that any learning for life can happen confined within a classroom seated in a three square feet area for hours on end. Subjecting children to this I think is the gravest anti child rights act. The way I live today is not because of what I learnt in school, but outside its four walls.

Gunveen Kaur, Centre for Learning, Hyderabad

Responsibility for the children and the protection that they need as they grow is on us. Each child is a unique being. Each child has to be unconditionally accepted as an individual with limitations and strong points.

We must have centres where we learn to relate with the children without forgetting that we are adults. Where is it that I should provoke and when must I exercise restraint so as not hinder the child?

With regard to responsibility I would like to start with an unconditional acceptance of every child given all the limitations and also the potential they can achieve. One of the problems of the schooling system is that it is making a deliberate attempt to leave out, to screen. It often comes in the way of children achieving their unique potential. The school can be a place which can be very problematic.

Amina Kanjee, Pakistan

From experience I believe that one cannot make people learn. At most one can provide opportunities for learning. Experiential learning seems a little challenging in the confined school system. However I really want to explore the possibilities of making school a place where meaningful and authentic learning occurs.

I believe that knowledge is there within the child in the brain. A human being uses only 5% of his brain. The teachers can create strong links that will help the child to make the connections between the knowledge when it is scattered. So it is just the bridge that will help the child to link the internal knowledge to the outside world. If a teacher acts like a bridge in the child's life then he or she can support the child to learn in its own way.



"We do education differently." Group picture of pathbreaking educators assembled at Valpoi, Goa.

Ravi Gulati, Manzil

Manzil's work is about attempting to create opportunities for children and youth to experience in their formative years a space where learning can be fun, where fair and sensible rules tempered with compassion rather than a dictatorial, hierarchical setup run the affairs of any community, where 'learner' and 'teacher' are not fixed positions but roles that each one of us takes at different times and where both roles are equally respected, where questioning is encouraged, where action is valued, where there's total transparency in functioning, where open channels of communication are emphasized, where taking initiative is encouraged, where independent thinking and honesty are important in actions and not just good for preaching, etc.

Existing more as an extension of the family than as an institution, with its underlying holism, friendship and trust, Manzil plays an important part in the lives of the neighbourhood children and youth, providing mentorship, guidance, counselling, a space for open discussions, and an active involvement in useful, self-reflective work.

Tenzin Rigzin, Sarnath

For almost a decade now I have been interested in alternative education. My particular areas of interest are: value education and ideological and philosophical issues related to education.

I am also closely involved with Vidya Ashram, which is a new initiative that seeks to explore fundamental philosophical and ideological issues related to education. Vidya Ashram seeks to initiate debates on 'Knowledge in Society' and to bring about a dialogue between different knowledge traditions. It is envis-

aged as a place for exploration and innovation, but always able to submit to the benchmark of 'ordinary life'; a place where the farmer and the artisan stand on equal terms with the professor and the scientist.

Mona Patrao, Panchgani

The combination of working a small organic farm for about three decades, facilitating the land as a hub for learning along with initiating an experimental gurukul/home school, has propelled and strengthened my conviction and interest in experiential learning.

Besides the above initiative, I continue to offer farm life as an integral part of learning; running residential camps and workshops on ecology and sustainable living for schools; mapping and facilitating existing school curriculum to move to experiential and holistic learning.

Manas Mukul Das, Apana Vidyalaya

All the motivation to excel, in teachers and in students, is generated in school through competition. The means, fair or foul, hardly matter. Schools generally are a reflection of whatever is going on in society. The emotions that prevail in schools are identical with those that prevail in society: the killer instinct, ambition, hatred, jealousy, rivalry, anxiety, and tension. The division of society between the rich and the poor has given birth to schools for the rich and schools for the poor, making the situation much worse. Values are never learnt from a formal curriculum. They are imbibed from a school's informal social atmosphere created by the network of relationships which binds everyone and everything to each other in the school.

Every act of knowing is made up of a field that is known, a mind that knows, and the relationship between the two. Even the most prized institutions of education today which focus on excellence, look only at the field to be known, and strive to put maximum pressure on the mind to absorb information and intellectual skills. Unconcerned whether minds are getting twisted or cracking up, whether society is filling up with venomous emotions, the mills of education grind on.

Will there be a change? How will conflict end? If it cannot end at once in the whole of society, should the process not begin somewhere on a small scale? And should not the school get interested in the mind that knows, in the relationship behind the knower and the known, and in the ultimate ending of that relationship where the knower is the known; the singer, the song; the dancer, the dance; the philosopher, the thought; the meditator, the silence; the lover, the beloved; the devotee, lost in the deity?

K B Jinan, Kerala

When I lived with tribal communities in the northeast and in Orissa, I observed how the children of these communities learn without being schooled. I found that rural, tribal children are basically left to explore the world on their own. And this is not a bad thing at all.

A rural child begins to feed itself by the age of two and partakes of most activities around the home by the age of four. To the modern mind, doing things at home is labour, but to the rural child it is part of growing up. Learning and playing are not two separate activities.

As a result, while growing up naturally, the rural, tribal kid acquires all the basic knowledge needed for its survival. Cultivating, animal breeding and rearing, constructing, repairing, tool making, even basic medication, these are all part of everyday living and learning. Only this is not termed education by our modern urban system. What passes off as education incapacitates, shuns "doing" and makes one a passive thinker.

I have come to the conclusion that there is lack of free thinking in children because of the strong conditioning from family, school and society. Through our so-called education, we are culturally uprooted and our world views are totally altered. More important, our intuitive abilities get destroyed and distorted. I have found that people, who have not been taught to draw or paint, do it better. They express themselves naturally and every line, stroke, hue and tone has its own rule, design and justification.

Holistic knowing is a result of intuition. Intuition is possible only in an experiential process where the whole being is involved. And only in a natural learning process does experience itself become the context for learning. Authentic living is learning. Modern education has shifted the centre of knowledge from nature to human, from collective to ego, from heart to intellect/mind, from intuition to reason, from experience to information from holistic to compartmental.

As a consequence, the effects of modern education on the individual are compartmentalisation, alienation, intellectualization, conceptualisation, etc.

The worst pollution has been the one caused by words, concepts and books. Knowledge evolved out of experience is meaningful and is within the context of living. But the concepts created from abstraction are endless and most often meaningless. Deeper and authentic experience can evolve deeper knowledge.

Rajani Garud, Hubli

I feel angered by the word methodology because it cuts creativity. Every group has different abilities and they have to be taught differently. Alternative education is not about an alternative methodology. Alternative education is not a methodology but it is an alternative way of learning. We had several differences with parents and teachers because of this disparity in thinking.

The general impression that people have is: theatre is a medium of entertainment. Because theatre can grip a person's attention and influence his thinking and action, I think theatre carries with it a social responsibility. In fact, all cultural arts carry a social responsibility. Using theatre to educate can be very exciting especially since children love drama, role playing and the world of stories.

Chandrasekhar Devanna, Vetapalem, A P

In most schools children experience life as boring. The perception of life is moulded, streamlined based on designs provided by experts. For example school makes people depend on experts and social engineers to solve their life issues. This is the biggest loss to the human personality. It has created a consumerist society that cannot think beyond a confined vision and life has to be lived for pleasure. Learning as a whole is an alien concept to conditioned minds. School has deprived children of spontaneous play, thus depriving children of their psychological and philosophical growth.

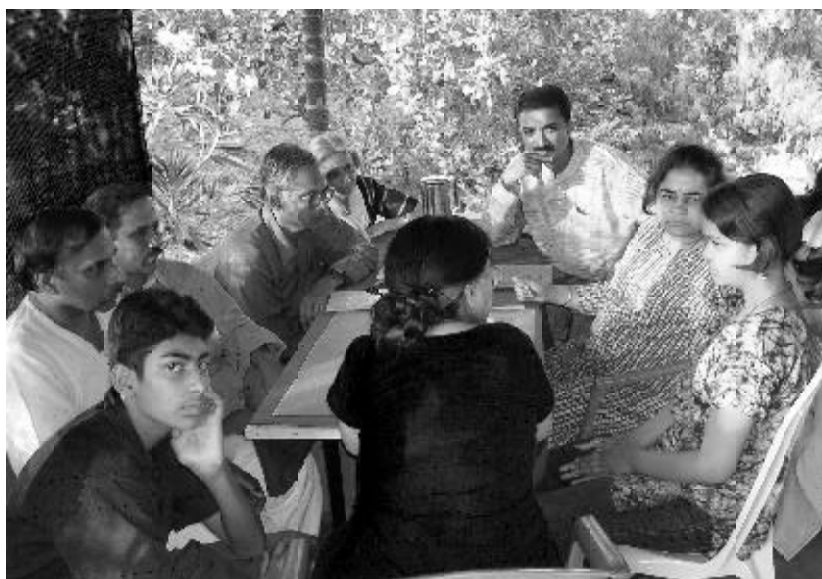
The major aspect of schooling is that it is a convenient tool for the society. The ideas of western schooling have invaded the whole world. We have lost our perceptions and our ability to see some indigenous learning opportunities and approaches. Now the discussions are about whether something good is still left in schooling. People are living and growing



Flanked by a bamboo grove, Lilatai inaugurates the Goa meeting



Gurveen Kaur, who runs an alternative school in Hyderabad, addresses the group, while (below) Manav Mukul Das and Hema listen on to Aspi Shroff.



Out-of-schoolers, Vivek Coelho and Sakhi, were part of the discussions

out of school because life and living are the best teachers.

Neema Vaishnana, Laxmi Ashram, Uttaranchal

Laxmi Ashram has a kind of cyclical routine which helps one understand relationships. There is a cowshed, a place for weaving, knitting, spinning, a kitchen garden, and a community space. Apart from these it is a place where people from eight years to seventy live together. What is the kind of relationship one can have with persons of different ages, experiences, interests, inclinations, responsibilities and duties? What is one's relation to this in the context of one's self? I saw a connectedness to life and the living. This was the education that the arrangement provided. If this arrangement was not available to me I would consider my education to be incomplete.

School education is not education at all. From what I have understood, education is an arrangement for a person to understand herself and our endeavours should be a medium towards meeting this end. This arrangement is already available in nature. Our real understanding does not come from school but from this natural arrangement.

Raghu Babu, Sajana

I joined the Sajana school. I was there for the period of one year. Here I started with agriculture.

We had 12 acres of land. The children used to work two or three hours a day. This curriculum linked the children with nature. By observing and working with the nature the children learnt a lot of things. The children had to maintain an information sheet, from the starting of the season till the end. The student had to note down the number of hours they put in to water the crops, how much yield was obtained etc.

On one acre of land we had grown creepers, on two acres ladyfingers, and on the remaining land we planted maize.

The children got the opportunity to learn about the plants while watering, observing, cutting etc. The children went to the fields to collect data, interview the farmer or the labourer there.

There were no prescribed textbooks, no fixed curriculum nor syllabus. The teachers used to teach according to the interest of the children and designed worksheets accordingly. The work of each student bound together became his own unique note cum text book.

'I just wanted out!'

David Hogg

'The road to hell is paved with good intentions,' goes the old adage. My childhood was the epitome of good intentions. Good parental and societal intentions! And yet, the idiom applies because, my life till the age of twenty became a living hell despite an entire absence of mala-fide on anyone's part.

‘Education’ did it!

What went wrong?

Till the age of five or six my life, as I recall it, was heaven. I was brought up in the idyllic greenness that is New Zealand.

Education in NZ in the 1950s was not dissimilar to the education imparted today in Indian village schools. It was drudgery to the core: rote learning, mindless repetitions and the inevitable tests and exams. Life descended on a slope from freedom to physical, emotional and mental chains, and all reportedly 'for my own good.' The perfidious exam regime grew in intensity as the years went by culminating (during that difficult time of puberty) in the most feared of all ordeals: school certificate!

To my mind the only really useful perception Freud ever had was that exams are the root of most anxiety dreams in males and that those who suffered most from these dreams were the ones who never failed an exam! Such was my case. The torment and confusion mounted. There were no answers to the many perplexing questions that arose in my mind.

This apart, academically also, to state an example: Geography was taught to us as an exercise in regurgitation of disconnected facts. So California, the golden state of world agriculture, was studied as an example of miracle agriculture. Quantity was the measure of success.

This was the factory syllabus and cramming was the order of the day. Grades were dispensed based on retentive memory.

And then at the age of fifteen, something wonderful happened!

In the midst of this scenario our class was introduced to a new teacher trainee: Mr. Tom Reeves, a young man in his twenties. He was sent by the Ministry of Education on deputation to our school for a period of two weeks in order to experiment in the presentation of a new way of teaching geography called: exploring the interrelationship between geographic phenomena.

So off we went on field trips to study river flow, erosion and dendritic drainage patterns in the Southern Alps. Next, on the seacoast, we meticulously measured sand and water transitions and their relationship with moon phases and tides. This revealed to our young minds the fact that our moon was somehow connected to our daily lives – now that was interesting! For two intense weeks we explored interrelationships and connections. Then as suddenly as he came Tom Reeves was gone and we were back to the facts business. But, in this brief period something had opened in my mind and the concept of learning and education changed forever.

Soon after, I applied to leave school and registered for a diploma course in the nearby agricultural university. Since my family came from farming 'stock', my parents were quite content with my inclination.

This was not to be.

My parents were summoned by the high school principal and he announced to them that he had no intention of allowing me to 'waste my life' in agriculture. My academic



ability indicated that I should opt for a lucrative career in law or accountancy. There was but a murmur of dissent from me for I had no allies and still no capacity to understand let alone articulate my proclivities. So the gray walls of mind and its development became grayer as I succumbed to the relentless pressure of the university entrance exam regime.

University and Law School soon manifested as I dumbly shuffled along the education production line. Increasingly stifled in a society seemingly devoid of introspection or a deeper sense of purpose I withdrew into a shell and yearned for answers to questions



David Hogg

I was yet incapable of formulating coherently. There was a damming of a flooded mix of thoughts and emotions till finally the dam burst.

In February 1971 I took an appointment with the Dean of the Canterbury Law School and announced I was leaving. I recall the Dean's puzzled and simple response: 'Well, I suppose you know what you are doing Mr. Hogg.'

I did not know; I hadn't a clue. I just wanted out!

So I walked out of the system and simultaneously I walked in ... into India! On October 26th 1971, I arrived in India and hell disappeared like a dream does on waking. Thus began my real education for: in the background, even in the midst of the subcontinent's social and economic chaos and self-evident human hardships, a tangible air of wisdom existed. I began to delve into the wealth of this ancient civilisation and soon a series of powerful experiences began integrating all those disparate elements of thought, will, emotion and physical awareness with the deeper underlying motive of existence.

This adventure in consciousness led me to an entire identification with all beings, living and apparently non-living and I came to understand that this fact of unitary existence was the very foundation of any civilised living. Thus I came to see what had so disturbed me during my 'education' for; it had been a process of division and separation, not integration.

I survived the maiming 'education' inflicted upon me. Fortunately I grew up in a society that allowed me the freedom to opt out. I resolved to make my 'career' a reflection of those life-changing experiences India had so benevolently bestowed on me.

The coming global society, if it is to be based on gnosis must first address this trauma it inflicts on its children. The shackles must be dismantled, society de-schoolled.

Presently, David is a Biodynamic Agriculture Consultant. He regularly conducts workshops on Biodynamic Agriculture and can be reached at:

Nandavan Estate
Pethuparai
Perumalmalai
kodaikanal –624 104
Tamil Nadu
email:davidhogg@rediffmail.com

About Kamiriithu

Kamiriithu will appear six times a year. The newsletter has been printed by Multiworld, Goa, India. It is designed for private circulation and is also posted on the Net at www.multiworld.org. It is published from:

The Multiworld Network,
G-8, St Britto's Apartments,
Feira Alta, Mapusa 403 507 Goa, India.
email: multi.worlds@gmail.com

(Details of subscribing to Kamiriithu are provided on page 2.)